



Klamath Network Featured Creature

August 2005

Orange Spotted Nudibranch (*Triopha catalinae*)

FIELD NOTES:

General Description:

This stylish sea slug (Opisthobranchia – naked gills) has an elongate, white body with bright orange or red tipped projections. There are rhinophores (antennae-like projections for detecting chemicals) and a circlet of gills. These nudibranchs are usually 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches (7 cm) long, but can reach 6 inches (15 cm) in length.

Behavior:

Besides crawling over rocks and plants, nudibranchs have also been observed crawling and feeding upside down on the water surface, hanging precariously (and amazingly) from the surface tension. They move across surfaces by secreting a slime trail and sliding along it like submarine ice skaters (with no legs). Predator protection comes from a nematocysts (stinging cells) or chemical defense (chemicals that make them taste yucky).

Feeding:

Nudibranchs use a radula (a tongue-like scraping appendage) to feed on sponges and bryozoans. Although the orange spotted nudibranch has bold coloring, some nudibranch's coloration comes from the prey they eat (i.e. a nudibranch that eats a purple sponge will be purple).

Where to see it in the Klamath Parks:

Because nudibranchs are marine species, Redwood National and State Parks is the place to find them, along with a host of other fascinating and colorful marine invertebrates.



Photo by Michael D. Miller

Habitat:

Orange spotted nudibranchs are associated with rocky tidal pools and kelp beds. They are found from the mid-intertidal zone to water 115' (35 m) deep.

Distribution:

In general, nudibranchs live throughout the world's oceans. Orange spotted nudibranchs are found from Amchitka Island, Alaska to El Tomutal, Baja California, Mexico.

Status:

Triopha catalinae is not listed as federally or locally endangered, but definitely is among the most fashionable of our Klamath Featured Creatures to date.

Information:

For more information and photographs of nudibranchs, visit the [Slug Site](#) [the Sea Slug Forum](#) on the web!